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(54) Title: METHOD FOR MODIFYING GELATION TIME OF ORGANICALLY CROSSLINKED, AQUEOUS GELS**(57) Abstract**

Enhanced gel properties (e.g., faster gel time, higher attainable gel strengths) are achieved by reducing the pH and/or increasing the salt of a monovalent and/or divalent cation concentration of an aqueous reaction medium in which a polymer is reacted with an organic crosslinking agent. In addition, the gelation time of an aqueous composition comprising a polymer and an organic crosslinking agent is reduced by heating the composition above about 48.9 °C (120 °F) prior to injecting the composition into a subterranean formation. Alternatively, the gelation time of the aqueous composition is increased by incorporating a pH increasing agent into the composition.

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METHOD FOR MODIFYING GELATION TIME OF
ORGANICALLY CROSSLINKED, AQUEOUS GELS

BACKGROUND

The present invention relates to (a) methods
5 for modifying the gelation time of organically crosslinked,
aqueous gels, (b) gels formed by the foregoing methods, (c)
compositions for forming the gels, and (d) subterranean
formations containing the gels.

Gels are used for several purposes in
10 connection with the production of a natural resource (e.g.,
oil, natural gas, and geothermal fluids) from subterranean
formations. For example, gels are employed (a) to reduce
the water/natural gas production ratio, (b) to reduce the
water/oil production ratio, (c) to plug off water producing
15 zones within a subterranean formation, and (d) to conform
the fluid permeability across the face of a subterranean
formation.

In addition, gels can be used to contain
migrating, hazardous wastes in the subsurface.

An important factor in forming these gels is
20 the time it takes for a gelable, polymer-containing
composition to gel. In some environments (e.g., low
temperature oil-producing reservoirs), the gelation time is
too long, requiring extended shut in periods to allow
25 complete gelation of the composition and to prevent the
flow of uncrosslinked polymer back into a wellbore.

In other environments, the gelation time is
too short. In this latter case, the rapid formation of the
gel impedes the satisfactory distribution of the gelable
30 composition prior to gelation.

Accordingly, there is a need to modify the gelation time of a gelable composition in order to form a gel in a satisfactory time frame.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention satisfies this need by providing compositions having variable gelation times. More specifically, the compositions of the present invention comprise (A) an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers
10 and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer; (B) an organic crosslinking agent; (C) water; and (D) a gelation time modifying agent selected from the group consisting of salts of monovalent and divalent cations, pH modifying agents, and mixtures
15 thereof. pH modifying agents which reduce the pH of the composition (hereinafter referred to as "pH reducing agents") as well as salts of monovalent and divalent cations shorten the gelation time of the composition, while pH modifying agents which increase the pH of the
20 composition (hereinafter referred to as "pH increasing agents") lengthen the gelation time of the composition.

The present invention also provides methods for forming a gel in a subterranean formation and recovery systems formed thereby. In one version, the gel is formed
25 in a subterranean formation by injecting one of the foregoing compositions into at least a portion of the subterranean formation. In another version, the ingredients which form the composition are distributed between two slugs (e.g., one slug comprising (A) water, (B)
30 the water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and/or polymerizable monomers, and (C) the gelation time modifying agent and the other slug comprising the crosslinking agent), with each slug being injected, either simultaneously or sequentially, into at least a portion of
35 the subterranean formation. In an alternative version, a composition comprising (A) water, (B) the water soluble,

crosslinkable polymers and/or polymerizable monomers, and (C) the crosslinking agent (but substantially devoid of any gelation time modifying agent) is heated at the surface to at least about 48.9°C (120°F) and then injected into the
5 subterranean formation.

The recovery system comprises a subterranean formation, a well penetrating at least a portion of the subterranean formation, and a gel present in at least a portion of the subterranean formation, the gel being formed
10 by any of the methods described in the preceding paragraph.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The gelation time of an organically crosslinked, aqueous gel is modified by incorporating a gelation time modifying agent into a composition used to
15 form the gel. The gelation time modifying agent is selected from the group consisting of pH modifying agents (more specifically, pH reducing agents and pH increasing agents), salts of monovalent and divalent cations, and mixtures thereof. The pH reducing agents are selected from
20 the group consisting of acids, acid precursors, buffers having a buffering capacity at or below about pH 6.5, and mixtures thereof. Acids include, but are not limited to the organic and inorganic acids listed in the Handbook of Chemistry and Physics, 65th Edition, Weast, Editor-in-
25 Chief, CRC Press, Inc. Boca Raton, Florida (1984) on pages D-165 to D-167 (hereinafter referred to as the "Handbook"), the Handbook being incorporated herein in its entirety by reference. Preferred acids are sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, acetic acid, citric acid, and carbonic acid.

30 Typical classes of acid precursors include hydrolyzable esters, acid anhydrides, sulfonates, organic halides, acid salts (e.g., ammonium citrate and ammonium acetate), acid gases (e.g., carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, and sulfur dioxide), and salts of a strong acid
35 and a weak base (e.g., ammonium chloride, ammonium sulfate,

ammonium nitrate, and ammonium phosphate). Exemplary specific acid precursors are ethyl formate, propyl formate, ethyl acetate, glycerol monoacetate, aceticin, glycerol diacetate, diacetin, xanthanes, thiocyanates, polyethylene esters, ethyl acetate esters, acrylate copolymers, and dimethyl esters. Ethyl formate, propyl formate, ethyl acetate, dibasic esters, ammonium acetate, ammonium citrate, carbon dioxide, and their mixtures are the preferred acid precursors.

10 Buffers having a buffering capacity at or below about pH 6.5 include, but are not limited to, potassium tartrate, potassium tetroxalate, and potassium phthalates.

15 All other things being equal, the lower the pH of a gel-forming composition of the present invention, the shorter the gelation time. Accordingly, in those instances where it is desired to obtain short gelation times, the pH of the gel-forming composition is typically about 6.5 or less, more typically about 6 or less, even more typically about 5.5 or less, and most typically about 5 or less. Preferably, in such instances, the gel-forming composition has a pH of about 4.5 or less, more preferably about 4 or less, even more preferably about 3.5 or less, and most preferably about 3 or less. Even lower pH's 20 25 (e.g., about 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1 or less) are also very desirable.

30 Regarding salts of monovalent and divalent cations, when all other parameters are held constant, the higher the cation concentration in the gel-forming composition, the shorter the gelation time for a given gel-forming composition. In addition, when all other parameters are held constant, an incremental increase in the concentration of a divalent cation is more effective for decreasing the gelation time of a gel-forming 35 35 composition than a corresponding incremental increase in the concentration of a monovalent cation in the gel-forming

5

composition. Accordingly, when a salt of a monovalent cation is used, the amount added (up to the saturation point of the composition) is typically about 1 or more, more typically about 2 or more, preferably about 3 or more, more preferably about 4 or more, and most preferably about 5 or more, weight percent. (To determine the present invention, multiply the desired weight percent of salt to be added by the weight of all ingredients in the final composition. As used in the specification and claims, the term "is added" or "adding" or similar language in reference to using a salt of a monovalent and/or divalent cation means introducing either a solid salt or a salt-containing first liquid (usually a solution) into a second liquid where the first liquid has a higher ionic strength than the second liquid.)

10 the compositions of the present invention added commonly, the amount of salt of a monovalent cation added is about 10 or less, more commonly about 9 or less, and most commonly about 8 or less, and most commonly about 7 or less, weight percent.

15 concerning the amount of salt of a divalent cation used in formulating the gel-forming composition, frequently about 0.15 or more, more frequently about 0.5 or more, even more frequently about 0.75 or more, and most frequently about 1 or more, weight percent is added (up to the saturation point of the composition). Preferably, the amount of salt of a divalent cation added in formulating the composition is about 1.5 or more, more preferably about 2 or more, even more preferably about 2.5 or more, and most

20 the composition is about 1.5 or more, weight percent. Typically, the amount of salt of a divalent cation added is about 9 or less, more typically about 8 or less, even more typically about 7 or less, and most typically about 6 or less, weight percent.

25

30 With respect to pH increasing agents, exemplary pH increasing agents include bases (e.g., sodium hydroxide), buffering agents having a buffering capacity

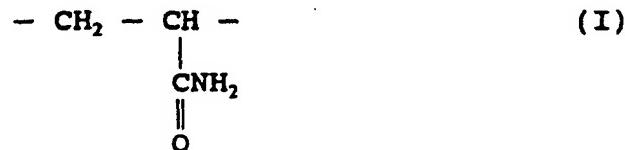
- above about pH 7, and base pr cursors (e.g., quaternary ammonium salts, ur a, substituted ureas, coordinated compounds, salts of a strong base and a weak acid, and basic gases (e.g., ammonia, methylamine, and ethylamine),
5 with the preferred base precursors being urea, thiourea, and mixtures thereof).

All other things being equal, the higher the pH of a gel-forming composition of the present invention, the longer the gelation time. Thus, in those instances
10 where it is desired to obtain longer gelation times, the amount of pH increasing agent used is commonly sufficient for the composition to have a pH of at least about 7, more commonly at least about 7.5, even more commonly at least about 8, and most commonly at least about 8.5. Preferably,
15 the composition comprises a sufficient amount of the pH increasing agent for the composition to have a pH of at least about 9, more preferably at least about 9.5, even more preferably at least about 10, and most preferably at least about 10.5.

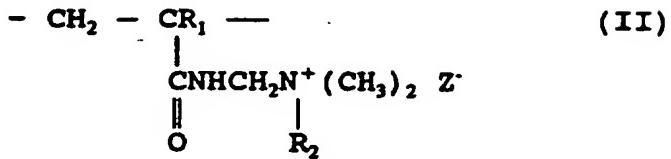
20 Other gel-forming ingredients include organic crosslinking agents and crosslinkable polymers and/or monomers capable of polymerizing to form a crosslinkable polymer. The organic crosslinking agents are well known to those skilled in the art. Exemplary organic
25 crosslinking agents include, but are not limited to, aldehydes, dialdehydes, phenols, substituted phenols, and ethers. Phenol, resorcinol, catechol, phloroglucinol, gallic acid, pyrogallol, 4,4'-diphenol, 1,3-dihydroxynaphthalene, 1,4-benzoquinone, hydroquinone, quinhydrone, tannin, phenyl acetate, phenyl benzoate, 1-naphthyl acetate, 2-naphthyl acetate, phenyl chloroacetate, hydroxyphenylalkanols, formaldehyde, paraformaldehyde, acetaldehyde, propionaldehyde, butyraldehyd , isobutyraldehyde, valeraldehyde, heptald hyde, decanal, 30 glyoxal, glutaraldehyde, ter phthaldehyd , hexamethylenetetramine, trioxane, t tra xan , polyoxym thylene, and divinyleth r ar some of the more

typical organic crosslinking agents. Individual or mixtures of crosslinking agents are used in the present invention.

- With respect to the crosslinkable polymers, 5 these polymers are typically water soluble. Common classes of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers include polyvinyl polymers, polyacrylic polymers, polyoxide polymers, polymethacrylamides, cellulose ethers, polysaccharides, lignosulfonates, ammonium salts thereof, alkali metal salts 10 thereof, as well as alkaline earth salts of lignosulfonates. Specific examples of typical water soluble polymers are acrylic acid-acrylamide copolymers, acrylic acid-methacrylamide copolymers, polyacrylamides, partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamides, partially hydrolyzed 15 polymethacrylamides, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, partially hydrolyzed polyvinyl acetate, polyalkyleneoxides, carboxycelluloses, carboxyalkylhydroxyethyl celluloses, hydroxyethylcellulose, galactomannans (e.g., guar gum), substituted galactomannans (e.g., hydroxypropyl guar), 20 heteropolysaccharides obtained by the fermentation of starch-derived sugar (e.g., xanthan gum), and ammonium and alkali metal salts thereof. Preferred water soluble, crosslinkable polymers include hydroxypropyl guar, copolymers of acrylic acid and acrylamide, unhydrolyzed 25 polyacrylamides, partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamides, cationic polyacrylamides, cationic denatured polyacrylamides, xanthan gum, polyvinyl alcohol, partially hydrolyzed polyvinyl acetate, and the ammonium and alkali metal salts thereof.
- 30 One class of cationic polyacrylamides useful as the crosslinkable polymer comprises an (i) acrylamide unit having the formula I



and (ii) a cationic unit having the formula II



where Z is an anion and R₁ and R₂ are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and alkyl groups containing 1 to 10 carbon atoms. In this exemplary

- 10 cationic polyacrylamide, the mole fraction of acrylamide units of formula I is typically less than about 0.5, more typically about 0.4 or less, and preferably about 0.3 or less, more preferably about 0.2 or less, and even more preferably about 0.1 or less, and most preferably 0, and
15 the mole fraction of cationic units of formula II present in the polymer is commonly at least 0.5, more commonly about 0.6 or more, and preferably about 0.7 or more, more preferably about 0.8 or more, even more preferably about 0.9 or more, and most preferably about 1, provided that the
20 total sum of these mole fractions is 1. (When the mole fraction of cationic units of formula II in the polymer is 1, the polymer is a cationic denatured polyacrylamide.) Preferably, the number of carbon atoms in the alkyl group is 1 to about 5, more preferably 1 to about 3, even more
25 preferably 1 to about 2, and most preferably 1. In addition, the polymer can be a random, block, or alternating polymer.

- The crosslinkable polymers are generally available in several forms such as a water solution or broth, a gel log solution, a dried powder, and a hydrocarbon emulsion or dispersion. As is well known to those skilled in the art, different types of equipment are employed to handle these different forms of crosslinkable polymers.

- 35 Monomers capable of polymerizing to form a crosslinkable polymer include, but are not limited to,

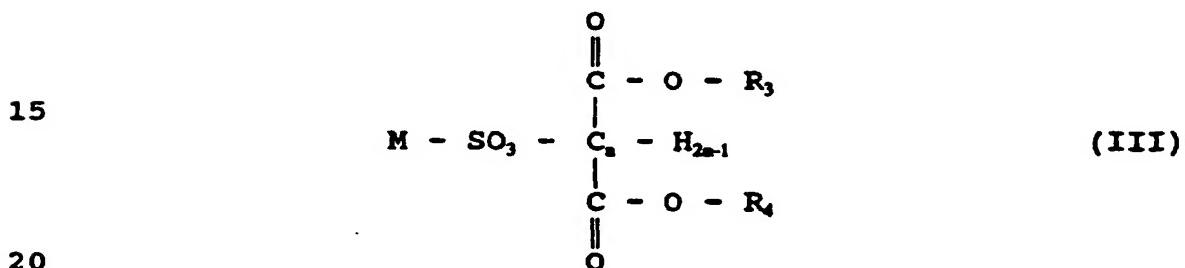
acrylamide, vinyl acetate, acrylic acid, methacrylamide,
ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, and cationic monomers
which, when polymerized, yield the cationic units of above
formula II.

5 surfactants are optionally, chelating agents and/or
invention. Exemplary types of chelating agents include,
but are not limited to, polyphosphates (e.g., sodium
tripolyphosphate, hexametaphosphoric acid), aminocarboxylic
10 acids (e.g., ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA), N-
(hydroxyethyl) ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (HEDTA), N-
nitrilotriacetic acid (DTPA)), diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid
acid (DTPA), N-dihydroxyethylglycine, 1,3-diketones (e.g.,
ethylenebis(hydroxyphenylglycine), ethylacetone, trifluoroacetyl-
15 tartaric acid, citric acid, gluconic acid, 5-sulfosalicylic
thenoyltrifluoroacetone), hydroxycarboxylic acids (e.g.,
acid), polyamines (e.g., triethylenediamine, triaminotriethylamine, aminocarboxylic
20 acid), polyamines (e.g., triethanolamine, N-hydroxyethylamine, aminalcohols
triethylenetetramine, triaminotriethylamine, aminophenols
aromatic heterocyclic bases (e.g., dipyridyl, o-
phenanthroline), phenols (e.g., salicylaldehyde, 25
disulfopyrocatechol, chromotropic acid, aminophenols
(e.g., oxine, 8-hydroxyquinoline, salicylaldoxime), Schiff
oximes (e.g., dimethylglyoxime, oximesulfonic acid),
bases (e.g., disalicylaldehyde 1,2-propylenedimine),
tetrapyrroles (e.g., tetraphenylporphin, phthalocyanine),
sulfur compounds (e.g., thioglycolic acid, potassium ethyl xanthate, sodium
30 thioldithiocarbamate, dithizone, diethyl dithiophosphoric
acid, thiourea), polymeric (e.g., poly(p-vinylbenzylimidodiacetic
acid), polymethacryloylacetone, poly(methylenephosphonic acid),
35 nitrilotriacetic acid, poly(p-vinylbenzylimidodiacetic
acid), and phosphonic acids (e.g., polyethylenimine,
hydroxyethylidenediphosphonic acid).

Regarding surfactants, preferred surfactants are water-soluble and have sufficient foaming ability to enable the composition, when traversed by a gas, to foam and, upon curing, form a foamed gel. Non-limiting examples of the preferred surfactants are those which, when incorporated into water in a concentration of about 5 weight percent (based on the total weight of water and surfactant), meet the following described test. The surfactant is dissolved in water and about 500 ml of the resulting solution is placed in a graduated cylinder to form a column having a height of about 50 cm. Natural gas is passed into the bottom of the column through a fritt'd glass disc at substantially atmospheric pressure so that the gas bubbles through the column of liquid and passes out the top of the cylinder. The gas rate is maintained at about 500 ml gas per minute per square inch of column cross-sectional area, and the flow of the gas is continued for a period of about 15 minutes. The preferred surfactants produce a column of foam at least about 180 cm in height under these conditions at the top of the column of water.

Exemplary surfactants include, but are not limited to, alkyl polyethylene oxide sulfates (e.g., Alipal CD 128 brand surfactant), alkyl alkylolamine sulfates, modified ether alcohol sulfate sodium salt, sodium lauryl sulfate, perfluoroalkanoic acids and salts having about 3 to about 24 carbon atoms per molecule (e.g., perfluorooctanoic acid, perfluoropropanoic acid, and perfluorononanoic acid), modified fatty alkylolamides, polyoxyethylene alkyl aryl ethers, octylphenoxyethanol, ethanolated alkyl guanidine-amine complexes, condensation of hydrogenated tallow amide and ethylene oxide, ethylene cyclomido 1-lauryl, 2-hydroxy, ethylene sodium alcholate, methylene sodium carboxylate, alkyl arylsulfonates, sodium alkyl naphthalene sulfonate, sodium hydrocarbon sulfonates, petroleum sulfonates, sodium linear alkyl aryl sulfonates, alpha olefin sulfonates, condensation product of propylene oxide with ethylene oxide, sodium salt of sulfated fatty

alcohols, octylphenoxy polyethoxy ethanol, orbitan monolaurat, sorbitan monopalmitate, sorbitan trioleate, polyoxyethylene sorbitan tristearat, poly xyethylen sorbitan tristearate, polyoxyethylene sorbitan monooleate, 5 dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate, modified phthalic glycerol alkyl resin, octylphenoxy polyethoxy ethanol, acetylphenoxy polyethoxy ethanol, dimethyl didodecenyl ammonium chloride, methyl trioctenyl ammonium iodide, trimethyl decenyl ammonium chloride, dibutyl dihexadecenyl ammonium chloride, 10 and water-soluble salts of esters of C₃ to C₆ sulfodicarboxylic acids having the general formula III



where M is selected from the group consisting of alkali metals, ammonium, and substituted ammonium; R₃ and R₄ are each independently an alkyl group containing about 3 to about 16 carbon atoms, and n is an integer from 1 to about 25 4.

In general, the gel-forming compositions are formed by mixing the polymer, the crosslinking agent, the gelation time modifying agent, and, optionally, the chelating agent and/or the surfactant. As known to those skilled in the art, the exact polymer and crosslinking agent concentrations are selected to assure (a) gel stability at reservoir (i.e., subterranean) conditions and (b) a suitable time frame for injecting the composition prior to gelation. The polymer is generally employed in a concentration of about 0.05 to about 50 weight percent, with polymer concentrations of about 0.1 to about 10 weight percent being preferred, about 0.2 to about 5 weight percent being more preferred, and about 0.25 to about 2.5 weight percent being most preferred. (Unless otherwise

indicated, as used in the specification and claims, the term "weight percent" means the weight of a particular ingredient (e.g., polymer, crosslinking agent, gelation time modifier agent, chelating agent, or surfactant) divided by the total weight of all ingredients present in the gel-forming composition.) Typically, the crosslinking agent is employed in a concentration of about 0.001 to about 5, preferably about 0.005 to about 2, more preferably about 0.0075 to about 1, and most preferably about 0.01 to about 0.5, weight percent.

With respect to the chelating agent, the chelating agent is generally employed in the composition in a concentration of at least about 0.75 mole per mole of dissolved divalent cations dissolved in either the aqueous phase of the composition or in the water located in the subterranean formation where the gel will be formed, whichever is greater. Preferably, the ratio of the moles of the chelating agent employed in the gel-forming composition to the moles of the dissolved divalent cation is about 0.75:1 to about 10:1, more preferably about 0.8:1 to about 5:1, even more preferably about 0.9:1 to about 2:1, and most preferably about 0.9:1 to about 1.5:1. While a ratio of about 10 moles chelating agent per mole dissolved divalent cation can be employed in the invention, there does not appear to be any significant advantage to employing a ratio greater than about 1:1.

In some cases (e.g., when phenolic chelating agents are employed), the chelating agent is capable of also functioning as a crosslinking agent. If no other crosslinking agent is present, the concentration of the dual acting substance falls within a range equal to the sum of the above-stated concentration ranges for the crosslinking agent and chelating agent. However, when a crosslinking agent is present that is not a chelating agent, the crosslinking agent is preferably present in the above-described crosslinking agent concentration ranges, and the dual acting chelating agent is preferably present

in the above-noted chelating agent concentration ranges. In those instances where a crosslinking agent is present in a concentration less than about 0.001 weight percent, then the concentration of the dual acting chelating agent in the 5 gel-forming composition is preferably at least about 1 mole per mole of divalent cations dissolved in the water employed in making the composition.

When employed, the surfactant is typically used in a concentration up to about 10, preferably about 10 0.01 to about 5, more preferably about 0.05 to about 3, and most preferably about 0.1 to about 2 weight percent.

When separate slugs of the crosslinkable polymer, the crosslinking agent, the chelating agent, the gelation time modifying agent, and/or the surfactant are 15 injected into the subterranean formation, the amount of each of these injected ingredients is generally sufficient for their respective concentrations in the combined weight of the injected slugs (including the weight of any intervening spacer slugs) to fall within the above-stated 20 concentration ranges.

While the separate slugs are injectable in any order, it is preferred that a slug containing the polymer, the gelation time modifying agent, and water (and, optionally, the chelating agent and/or the surfactant) be 25 injected prior to injecting a crosslinking agent-containing slug. In addition, each slug is injectable as a single unit or injectable as a plurality of miniunits having substantially the same make-up.

Furthermore, it is preferred to inject a 30 preflush fluid prior to injecting the slug or slugs that constitute the gel-forming composition. The volume of preflush fluid injected is generally about 5 to about 10 volume percent of the total volume of injected material constituting the gel-forming composition. The preflush 35 fluid typically comprises a crosslinking agent and water,

the concentration of the crosslinking agent in the preflush fluid being roughly about double the concentration of the crosslinking agent in the gel-forming composition.

Optionally, the preflush fluid also contains a chelating agent. When employed, the concentration of the chelating agent in the preflush fluid is approximately the same as the concentration of the chelating agent in the gel-forming composition. (The preflush fluid is not considered part of the gel-forming composition and is, therefore, not included in calculating the volume of material which constitutes the gel-forming composition. Similarly, the amount of each ingredient (e.g., crosslinking agent and chelating agent) present in the preflush fluid is not included in calculating the concentration of the respective ingredient in the gel-forming composition.)

When a surfactant is employed in the process of the present invention, one or more slugs of a gas are usually also injected into the subterranean formation. While the gas slugs are injectable before, during, or after the injection of the gel-forming composition or separate slugs constituting the gel-forming composition, it is preferred to inject at least some, and more preferentially all, of the gas slugs after or simultaneously during the injection of the composition. Also preferred is the alternate, sequential injection of one or more slugs of the gel-forming composition and one or more slugs of the gas. The gas slugs are injected into the composition during the gelation period and before the composition has formed a gel incapable of being penetrated by the gas at normal gas injection pressures. (Normal gas injection pressures are injection pressures less than the formation fracturing pressure.) The gas slugs foam the surfactant-containing composition so that a foamed gel is produced.

The amount of gas injected (when measured at the temperature and pressure conditions in the subterranean formation being treated) is generally about 1 to about 99 volume percent based upon the total volume of treatment

fluids injected into the subterranean formation (i.e., the sum of the volume of injected gas plus the volume of injected, foamable, gel-forming composition). Preferably, the amount of gas injected is about 20 to about 98, and 5 more preferably about 40 to about 95, volume percent based upon the total volume of injected treatment fluids.

The injected gas is usually a noncondensable gas. Exemplary noncondensable gases include air, oxygen, hydrogen, noble gases (helium, neon, argon, krypton, xenon, 10 and radon), natural gas, hydrocarbon gases (e.g., methane, ethane), nitrogen, and carbon dioxide. Air, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide are the more preferred noncondensable gases, with nitrogen being the most preferred.

One exemplary process for practicing the 15 present invention is as follows. Before mixing any chemicals into the water employed in making the gel-forming composition, the water is generally filtered to prevent any suspended solids from damaging the formation by plugging the wellbore. Typically, the first chemicals added to the 20 water are any required salts such as monovalent cations (e.g., potassium chloride), divalent cations (e.g., calcium chloride), and/or the chelating agent (e.g., EDTA). The potassium chloride is generally employed to prevent clay problems in the formation. Potassium chloride also helps 25 to (a) stabilize the gel at low temperatures (e.g., at a temperature less than about 65.6°C (150°F)) and (b) reduce gelation time.

In order for the polymer to experience a high degree of turbulence during the initial mixing stage, 30 solid polymers and liquid-based polymers are usually added to the water through an eductor or a positive displacement pump, respectively. The polymer and water are typically mixed in a mixing tank in small 1589.9 l (10 barrel) to 3974.7 l (25 barrel) batches. When desired, further 35 mixing is achieved using either centrifugal pumps or other forms of agitation.

Frequently, the last chemicals added to the mixing tank are the crosslinking agent and the pH modifying agent. When used in a solid form, the crosslinking agent and the pH modifying agent are normally first dissolved in 5 water in order for them to more readily mix with the contents of the mixing tank. This is especially important when the contents of the mixing tank are very viscous.

The gel-forming composition is obtained when all the desired ingredients have been mixed in the 10 mixing tank. The resulting gel-forming composition is then often injected into the subterranean formation through either a production well or an injection well at a pressure below the fracture pressure of the formation. Depending on the injection capabilities of the well, the first slug of 15 the gel-forming composition generally varies from about 7949.4 l (50 barrels) to about 79494.1 l (500 barrels).

The manner in which a non-foaming, gel-forming composition is injected into a well typically 20 depends on whether the well penetrates a gas-producing formation or an oil-producing formation. In the case of an oil well, a single slug of the non-foaming, gel-forming composition is generally injected. In contrast, alternate slugs of the non-foaming, gel-forming composition are 25 usually injected into a gas well, with the alternating slug commonly being a noncondensable gas.

When a foamed gel is desired, the surfactant is preferably added to the gel-forming composition "on the fly," i.e., as the composition is being injected into the 30 subterranean formation. (Introducing the surfactant into the composition "on the fly" avoids foaming the composition in the mixing tank.) Next, the injection of the foamable gel-forming composition is stopped, and a noncondensable gas such as nitrogen is injected into the production well 35 to foam the gel-forming composition. The volume of the nitrogen slug (based upon the temperature and pressure

conditions within th formation being treated) is typically about 100 to about 1,000 perc nt of the volume f th previously injected slug of foamable gel-forming composition volume. The alternating slugs of foamable gel-
5 forming composition and nitrogen are then repeated to achieve the desired penetration depth into the formation as well as the desired degree of foam quality. (The resulting foamed gel usually has a foam quality of at least about 50, preferably about 70 to about 99, more preferably about 80
10 to about 99, and most preferably about 90 to about 98, volume percent. As used in the specification and claims, the term "foam quality" means the volume of gas bubbles present in the foamed gel divided by the entire volume of the foamed gel.) The volume of the final nitrogen slug is
15 preferably large enough to over-displace the wellbore of any foamable, gel-forming composition.

The gel-forming composition is displaced into the formation a sufficient distance so that at least a portion of the pore space in the formation, typically at
20 least about 0.91 m (3 feet) from the production well or point of injection, is occupied by the composition. (When an oil well is being treated with a non-foaming, gel-forming composition, the composition is preferably displaced with an oil (e.g., crude oil, mineral oil, diesel
25 oil, as well as oil produced from the subterranean formation being treated). When a water injection well is being treated, the composition is preferably displaced with water. In those instances where a gas well is being treated or where a foaming, gel-forming composition is
30 being used, the composition is typically displaced into the formation with a noncondensable gas.) Preferably, the gel-forming composition occupies at least a portion of the pores located at least about 4.57 m (15 feet) from the well. More preferably, at least some of th pores located
35 at least about 9.17 m (30 feet) from the production well contain the composition.

The well is then shut in for a sufficient period of time to allow the gel-forming composition within the pores of the subterranean formation to gel. Next, the well is slowly put back into service following the shut in period.

- Accordingly, a gel or crosslinked polymer is generally formed by reacting or contacting proper proportions of (a) an organic crosslinking agent and (b) a crosslinkable polymer and/or polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer in the presence of (c) a gelation time modifying agent. As indicated above, the crosslinkable polymer or monomers capable of polymerizing to form a crosslinkable polymer and the crosslinking agent need not both be present in the gel-forming composition.
- When the crosslinkable polymer or crosslinking agent is omitted from the composition, the omitted material is usually introduced into the subterranean formation as a separate slug, either before, after, or simultaneously with the introduction of the gel-forming composition.
- Preferably, the composition comprises both (a) the crosslinking agent and (b) either (i) the crosslinkable polymer or (ii) the polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer.

Because of their stability in an acidic environment, the gels of this invention are especially well suited for use in a subterranean formation subjected to a carbon dioxide flooding operation. The gel can be formed in the subterranean formation either prior to or after the commencement of the carbon dioxide flood. When the gel is formed prior to the commencement of the carbon dioxide flood, a gelation time modifying agent which reduces the gelation time (i.e., a salt of a monovalent and/or divalent cation, a pH reducing agent, or mixtures thereof) is selected.

When formed after the commencement of the carbon dioxide flood, a gelation time modifying agent which

increases the gelation time (i.e., a pH increasing agent) is employed to prevent premature gelling. (The pH increasing agent can either be incorporated into the composition or introduced into the subterranean formation 5 in a separate slug injected ahead of the composition.) The reason for using a pH increasing agent is that a carbon dioxide flooded formation tends to be quite acidic and acidic environments tend to reduce the gelation time of the composition. However, even when the composition is 10 intended for use in an acidic environment, the addition of a salt of a monovalent and/or divalent cation to the composition may still be desirable for the gels to exhibit increased gel strengths.

The compositions of the present invention 15 are also useful for inhibiting the migration of a hazardous acid plume through a subterranean stratum of a landfill or natural subterranean formation. In one version, a pH increasing agent-containing composition is injected through one or more wellbores, e.g., observation wells, into the 20 acid plume. Once in the acid plume, the pH increasing agent-containing composition commingles with the plume, with the resulting composition gelling as the pH of the composition falls. The migration of the acid plume is inhibited by the presence of the gel in the formation or 25 stratum.

In another version, a composition of the present invention is injected through one or more wellbores into a subterranean region or stratum outside the acid plume but in the migration path of the plume. (Several 30 wells can be used to construct a continuous gel barrier in the formation to prevent the migration of the acid plume.) In this instance, the composition generally comprises a gelation time reducing agent selected from the group consisting of salts of monovalent and divalent cations, pH 35 reducing agents, and mixtures thereof.

Regardless whether the composition is injected into or outside the acid plume, the volume of the composition injected per wellbore depends on the number of wells and the volume and cross-sectional area of the plume 5 intersecting the wellbore. In rough terms, about 15898.8 l (100 barrels) to about 1589882 l (10,000 barrels) of the composition are injected per well.

In another version, a composition comprising (A) water, (B) the water soluble, crosslinkable polymers 10 and/or polymerizable monomers, and (C) the crosslinking agent (but substantially devoid of any gelation time modifying agent) is initially heated at the surface to between about 48.9°C (120°F) and about 100°C (212°F) and then injected into the subterranean formation. In this 15 embodiment, the composition is commonly heated to at least about 54.4°C (130°F), more commonly to at least about 60°C (140°F), even more commonly to at least about 65.6°C (150°F), and most commonly to about 71.1°C (160°F). Preferably, the composition is heated to at least about 20 76.6°C (170°F), more preferably to at least about 82.2°C (180°F), even more preferably to at least about 87.8°C (190°F), and most preferably to about 93.3°C (200°F). In an alternative embodiment of this version, all ingredients except for the polymer and/or crosslinking agent are heated 25 to the desired temperature and the omitted ingredient(s) is(are) added just prior to injecting the composition into the subterranean formation.

EXAMPLES

The following examples, which are intended 30 to illustrate and not limit the invention, demonstrate the preparation of exemplary compositions and gels within the scope of invention, the stability of the gels when aged at selected temperatures, and a comparison of such gels with other gels.

EXAMPLES 1-14

Stock solutions were prepared using the following protocol.

Allied Colloids 935 Brand Polymer Stock Solution

5 Sodium bicarbonate (about 6 g) and Allied Colloids 935 brand medium molecular weight, partially hydrolyzed (about 10 percent) polyacrylamide polymer (about 4.5 g) were added to seawater (about 289.5 g).

Hydroquinone Stock Solution

10 Hydroquinone was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hydroquinone stock solution.

Hexamethylenetetramine Stock Solution

15 Hexamethylenetetramine was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hexamethylenetetramine stock solution.

Mix Water Stock Solution

Calcium chloride (about 20 g) and sodium bicarbonate (about 2 g) were added to distilled water (about 78 g).

20 Bic Water Stock Solution

Sodium bicarbonate (about 2 g) was added to distilled water (about 98 g).

Using the above stock solutions, test samples were prepared and evaluated using the following
25 protocol.

Test Sample

For each sample, the polymer and bic water stock solutions were added to a vial to achieve the concentrations shown below in Table A. Next, the mix water stock solution, when employed, was added to the vial in the amounts listed in Table A. Finally, the hydroquinone and hexamethylenetetramine stock solutions were added (using a micropipette) to the vial in amounts indicated in Table A. The vial was then capped and shaken.

TABLE A
Gel Formulations

5 Example	Stock Solutions				Gel			
	Polymer g	HQ ¹ μL	HMT ² μL	MW ³ g	BW ⁴ g	Polymer ppmW	HQ ppmW	HMT ppmW
1	8.33	150	150	0	1.6	12,500	1,500	1,500
2	8.33	300	300	0	1.6	12,500	3,000	3,000
3	8.33	350	350	0	1.6	12,500	3,500	3,500
4	8.33	400	400	0	1.6	12,500	4,000	4,000
10	5	6.67	150	150	0	3.3	10,000	1,500
6	3.33	150	150	0	6.6	5,000	1,500	1,500
7	3.33	200	200	0	6.6	5,000	2,000	2,000
8	8.33	150	150	0.5	1.1	12,500	1,500	1,500
9	8.33	300	300	0.5	1.1	12,500	3,000	3,000
15	10	8.33	350	350	0.5	1.1	12,500	3,500
11	8.33	400	400	0.5	1.1	12,500	4,000	4,000
12	6.67	150	150	0.5	2.8	10,000	1,500	1,500
13	3.33	150	150	0.5	6.1	5,000	1,500	1,500
14	3.33	200	200	0.5	6.1	5,000	2,000	2,000

20 1. HQ denotes hydroquinone.

2. HMT denotes hexamethylenetetramine.

3. MW denotes mix water.

4. BW denotes bic water.

Test Procedure

Each of samples 1 to 14 were aged in an oven at a temperature of about 110°C (230°F). Each of the aged samples were rated using the gel rating key shown below in 5 Table B.

TABLE BGel Rating Key

	1	No Gel
10	2	Slight Gel
	3	Weak Gel
	4	Elastic Gel
	5	Strong Gel
	n‡	‡ Syneresed (Separated)
Water		
15	T	Trace of Water

The results of the aging tests are set forth in the following Table C.

TABLE C

Ex	Hours					Days				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	7	
5	1	2-	2-	2-	2-	2	4++	5-	5/T	5+/T
	2	2-	2-	2-	2	2+	5++	5++	5++	5++/T
	3	2-	2-	2-	2	3-	5++	5++	5++	5++
	4	2-	2-	2-	2	3-	5++	5++	5++	5++/T
	5	2-	2-	2-	2	2-	4++	5-	4++	5-
10	6	1+	1+	1+	1+	2-	4	4+	4+	4+
	7	1+	1+	1+	2-	2-	4+	4++	4++	4++
	8	2-	2-	2	2	2	5+/T	5+/T	5++/T	5++/T
	9	2-	2-	2	3-	3	5++/T	5++/T	5+/T	5+/T
	10	2-	2-	2	3+	4-	5++	5+/T	5+/T	5+/T
15	11	2-	2-	2	3+	4-	5+/T	5++/T	5+/T	5+/T
	12	2-	2-	2-	2-	2-	5-	5+	5+/T	5+/T
	13	1+	1+	1+	1+	1+	4+	4++	5-	5-/T
	14	1+	1+	1+	1+	1+	4+	4++	5-	5-/T

The results listed above in Table C indicate
 20 that gels prepared with divalent calcium tend to gel
 faster.

EXAMPLES 15-22

Stock solutions were prepared using the
 following protocol.

25 Allied Colloid 935 Brand Polymer Stock Solution

Sodium bicarbonate (about 6 g) and Allied
 Colloids 935 brand medium molecular weight, partially
 hydrolyzed (about 10 percent) polyacrylamide polymer (about
 4.5 g) were added to seawater (about 289.5 g).

30 SNF AN 905 BPM Brand Polymer Stock Solution

Sodium bicarbonate (about 6 g) and SNF AN 905 BPM brand partially hydrolyzed p lyacrylamide p lymer (about 4.5 g) were added to seawater (about 289.5 g).

Hydroquinone Stock Solution

5 Hydroquinone was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hydroquinone stock solution.

Hexamethylenetetramine Stock Solution

10 Hexamethylenetetramine was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hexamethylenetetramine stock solution.

Mix Water Stock Solution

Calcium chloride (about 20 g) and sodium bicarbonate (about 2 g) were added to distilled water (about 78 g).

15 Bic Water Stock Solution

Sodium bicarbonate (about 2 g) was added to distilled water (about 98 g).

20 Using the above stock solutions, test samples were prepared and evaluated using the following protocol.

Test Sample

For each sample, appropriate amounts of the polymer, bic water, and mix water stock solutions were added to a vial to achieve the concentrations shown below 25 in Table D. Next, using a micropipette, the hydroquinone and hexamethylenetetramine stock solutions were added to the vial to achieve the concentrations indicated in Table

D. Each vial (which contained about 10 g) was then capped and shaken.

Test Procedure

- Each sample was aged in an oven at a
5 temperature of about 54.4°C (130°F) and rated using the gel rating key set forth above in Table B. The results of the aging tests are set forth in the following Table D.

TABLE DGels Prepared In Seawater Containing 2 wt% Sodium Bicarbonate, Aged At 54.5°C (130°F)

Ex	Polymer	ppm						Gel Ratings, days					
		HQ ¹	CaCl ₂	HMT ²	1	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	14
5	15 A ³	7,500	2,500	1	5,000	2-	2	3-	4	5-	5+	NT ⁴	NT
16	A	7,500	2,500	0	5,000	2-	2	2	2+	2+	3	4-	5-
17	S ⁵	7,500	2,500	1	5,000	2	2	3	4+	4+	5	NT	NT
18	S	7,500	2,500	0	5,000	2-	2	2+	2+	3-	3-	4-	4++
19	A	10,000	2,500	1	5,000	2-	2	3+	4++	5-	5/T	NT	5+/5%
10	A	10,000	2,500	0	5,000	2	2	2	2	3-	3	4-	4
21	S	10,000	2,500	1	5,000	2-	2	4	4++	5	5+/T	NT	5+/T
22	S	10,000	2,500	0	5,000	2	2	2+	3+	4-	4	4+	5+
													5+/5%

1. HQ denotes hydroquinone.
2. HMT denotes hexamethylenetetramine.
3. "A" denotes Allied Colloids 935 brand polymer.
4. NT denotes not taken.
5. "S" denotes SNF AN 905 BPM brand polymer.

15

The results noted in the foregoing Tabl D also indicate that gels prepared with divalent calcium tend to exhibit faster gel times.

EXAMPLES 23-28

5 Stock solutions were prepared using the following protocol.

ORP-750 Brand Polymer Stock Solution

10 Sodium bicarbonate (about 6 g) and ORP-750 brand very high molecular weight, polyacrylamide polymer (about 4.5 g; available from Dai-Ichi Kogyo Seiyaku Co., Ltd. of Japan) were added to seawater (about 289.5 g).

Hydroquinone Stock Solution

Hydroquinone was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hydroquinone stock solution.

15 Hexamethylenetetramine Stock Solution

Hexamethylenetetramine was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hexamethylenetetramine stock solution.

Calcium Chloride Stock Solution

20 Calcium chloride (about 20 g) and sodium bicarbonate (about 2 g) were added to distilled water (about 78 g).

Magnesium Chloride Stock Solution

Magnesium chloride (about 20 g) and sodium bicarbonate (about 2 g) were added to distilled water (about 78 g).

5 Bic Water Stock Solution

Sodium bicarbonate (about 2 g) was added to distilled water (about 98 g).

Using the above stock solutions, test samples were prepared and evaluated using the following protocol.

10 Test Sample

For each sample, appropriate amounts of the polymer and the bic water stock solutions were added to a vial to achieve the concentrations shown below in Table E. Next, using a micropipette, the hydroquinone, 15 hexamethylenetetramine, and calcium or magnesium chloride stock solutions were added to the vial in amounts indicated in Table E. Each vial was then capped and shaken.

Test Procedure

Each sample was aged in an oven at a temperature 20 of about 87.8°C (190°F) and rated using the gel rating key shown above in Table B. The results of the aging tests are set forth in the following Table E.

TABLE E

Gels Prepared In Seawater Containing 2 wt% Sodium Bicarbonate and 1 wt % ORP-750 Polymer,
and Aged At 87.8°C (190°F).

Ex	ppm			Gel Ratings										
	HQ ¹	CaCl ₂	MgCl ₂	HMT ²	1	Hours	Days	1	2	3	4	1	2	Weeks
23	0	0	0	2,000	2+	4	4++	4++	5-	4+	4+	4+	4+	4+
24	0	1	0	2,000	2+	5	5+	5+	5+	5+	5+	5+	5+	5+
25	0	0	1	2,000	2+	4++	5-	5+	5+	5+/T	5+/T	5+	5+	5+
10	26	500	0	2,000	2+	4++	5-	5	5	5	5	5	5	5-
27	500	1	0	2,000	2+	5-	5-	5	5	5	5	5	5+	5+
28	500	0	1	2,000	2+	4+	5-	5	5	5	5	5	5-	5-

1. HQ denotes hydroquinone.
2. HMT denotes hexamethylenetetramine.

The results set forth above in Table E indicate that gels prepared with divalent calcium or divalent magnesium exhibit both shorter gel times and higher gel ratings than gels prepared without these added cations.

5

EXAMPLES 29-40

Stock solutions were prepared using the following protocol.

ORP-750 Brand Polymer Stock Solution

- Sodium bicarbonate (about 6 g) and Dai-Ichi Kogyo Seiyaku Co., Ltd. ORP-750 brand very high molecular weight, polyacrylamide polymer (about 3 g) were added to seawater or tapwater (about 291 g) and stirred at about 200 rpm until the polymer fully hydrated.

E-10 Polymer Stock Solution

- Sodium bicarbonate (about 6 g) and Allied Colloids Percol E-10 brand high molecular weight, polyacrylamide polymer (about 3 g) were added to seawater or tapwater (about 291 g) and stirred at about 200 rpm until the polymer fully hydrated.

Hydroquinone Stock Solution

Hydroquinone was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hydroquinone stock solution.

Hexamethylenetetramine Stock Solution

- Hexamethylenetetramine was mixed with distilled water to form a 10 weight percent hexamethylenetetramine stock solution.

Sulfuric Acid Stock Solution

The sulfuric acid stock solution consisted of concentrated sulfuric acid, i.e., 100% H₂SO₄.

Hydrochloric Acid Stock Solution

- 5 The hydrochloric acid stock solution consisted of concentrated hydrochloric acid, i.e., 36 weight percent HCl.

Ammonium Citrate Stock Solution

- 10 The ammonium citrate stock solution consisted of 10 weight percent ammonium citrate in distilled water.

Using the above stock solutions, test samples were prepared and evaluated using the following protocol.

Test Sample

- 15 About 10 g of one of the polymer stock solutions were added to each vial. Next, sufficient volumes of the hydroquinone, hexamethylenetetramine, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, and/or ammonium citrate stock solutions were added using a micropipette so that each vial contained the hydroquinone, hexamethylenetetramine, sulfuric acid, 20 hydrochloric acid, and ammonium citrate concentrations noted below in Tables F-H. Each vial was then capped and shaken.

Test Procedure

- 25 Each sample was aged in an oven at the temp ratures indicated in the following Tabl s F-H and, using the gel rating key shown above in Table B, periodically rated. The results of the aging tests are set forth in the following Tables F-H.

TABLE F

Gels Prepared In Tapwater Containing About
0.5 wt% Hydroquinone, About 1 wt% Hexamethylenetetramine,
About 1 wt% ORP-750 Polymer and Aged at Room Temperature

EX	H ₂ SO ₄ , wt%	HCl, wt%	pH	Hours		Gel Ratings		
				5	2	5	7	
29	0	0	7.5	1+	1+	1+	1+	
30	0.5	0	4.0	4-	4++	5-	5/T	
10 31	0	0.5	1.4	5-	5	5+	5+	

The results set forth above in Table F indicate that gelation time decreases as the pH of the gel-forming composition decreases.

TABLE G

Gels Prepared In Water Containing
About 0.2 wt% Hexamethylenetetramine and
About 1 wt% ORP-750 Polymer and Aged at 43.3°C (110°F)

Ex	H ₂ SO ₄ , wt%	HCl, wt%	pH	Water	Gel Ratings			
					Hours 4	Days 2	Weeks 1	Weeks 16
32	0	0	7.5	TapH ₂ O	1+	2-	2-	5-
33	0.2	0	1.4	TapH ₂ O	2+	4+	5-/T	5-/T
10	34	0	0.2	1.3	TapH ₂ O	2	4+	5-/T 5/5%
35	0	0	8.3	SeaH ₂ O	2-	2	4-	5-/5%
36	0.2	0	1.8	SeaH ₂ O	2+	4++	5-/T	5+/5%
37	0	0.2	1.6	SeaH ₂ O	2+	5-	5	5/5%

The results listed above in Table G also
15 demonstrate that gelation time decreases as the pH of the
gel-forming composition decreases.

TABLE H

Gels Prepared In Seawater Containing
20 About 0.5 wt% Hexamethylenetetramine and
About 1 wt% E-10 Polymer and Aged at 43.3°C (110°F)

Ex	Bubble CO ₂ ? ¹	NH ₄ Citrate wt%	pH	Gel Ratings			
				Days 3	Days 5	Weeks 2	Weeks 11
25	38	No	0	7.3	2+	2+	2+ 2+
	39	No	0.4	5.9	3-	4-	4+ 5-
	40	Yes	0	5.8	3-	4	4++ 5/5%

1. When employed, carbon dioxide was bubbled for about 1
minute at a rate of about 0.17 standard cubic meters
30 (scm) per day (6 scf/day).

The results noted in above Table H further
demonstrat that gelation time decreases as the pH of the
gel-forming composition decreases.

Although the present invention has been described in considerable detail with reference to some preferred versions, other versions are possible. Therefore, the spirit and scope of the appended claims should not necessarily be limited to the description of the preferred versions contained herein.

CLAIMS

1. A method for forming a gel in at least a portion of a subterranean formation, the method comprising the steps of:

(I) injecting a composition into at least a portion of a subterranean formation, the composition comprising (A) water, (B) an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer, and (C) a gelation time modifying agent; and

(II) injecting an organic crosslinking agent into at least a portion of the subterranean formation,

where the gelation time modifying agent is selected from the group consisting of salts of monovalent and divalent cations, pH reducing agents, pH increasing agents, and mixtures thereof, provided that

(i) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a monovalent cation, at least about 1 weight percent of the monovalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition,

(ii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a divalent cation, at least about 0.15 weight percent of the divalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition,

(iii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH reducing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH reducing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 6.5 or less; and

(iv) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH increasing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH increasing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 7 or more.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step (III) of injecting a stabilizing amount of a chelating

agent into at least a portion of the subterranean formation.

3. The method of claim 2 where at least a portion of steps (I) and (III) are performed prior to step (II).

4. A method for forming a gel in at least a portion of a subterranean formation, the method comprising the step of injecting a composition into at least a portion of a subterranean formation, the composition comprising:

(A) an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer;

(B) an organic crosslinking agent;

(C) water; and

(D) a gelation time modifying agent,

where the gelation time modifying agent is selected from the group consisting of salts of monovalent and divalent cations, pH reducing agents, pH increasing agents, and mixtures thereof, provided that

(i) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a monovalent cation, at least about 1 weight percent of the monovalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition,

(ii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a divalent cation, at least about 0.15 weight percent of the divalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition,

(iii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH reducing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH reducing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 6.5 or less; and

(iv) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH increasing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH increasing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 7 or more.

5. The method of any one of claims 1-4 where the gelation time modifying agent comprises the pH reducing agent and the pH reducing agent is selected from the group consisting of acids, acid precursors, buffers having a buffering capacity at or below about pH 6.5, and mixtures thereof.

6. The method of any one of claims 1-5 where the gelation time modifying agent comprises the pH reducing agent and the pH reducing agent is present in the composition in a sufficient concentration for the composition to have a pH of less than about 6.

7. The method of any one of claims 1-4 where the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a monovalent cation and at least about 2 weight percent of the monovalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition.

8. The method of any one of claims 1-4 where the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a divalent cation and at least about 0.5 weight percent of the divalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition.

9. The method of any one of claims 1-4 where the gelation time modifying agent comprises the pH increasing agent and the pH increasing agent is selected from the group consisting of bases, base precursors, buffers having a buffering capacity at or above about pH 7, and mixtures thereof.

10. The method of any one of claims 1-4 and 9 where the gelation time modifying agent comprises the pH increasing agent and the pH increasing agent is present in the composition in a sufficient concentration for the composition to have a pH of at least about 7.5.

11. The method of any one of claims 1-10 further comprising the steps of injecting a gas into at least a portion of the subterranean formation and injecting one or more ingredients capable of foaming the composition into at least a portion of the subterranean formation.

12. The method of any one of claims 1-10 further comprising the step of injecting a gas into at least a portion of the subterranean formation, where the composition further comprises one or more ingredients capable of foaming the composition.

13. A method for modifying the gelation time of a gel formed by reacting, in an aqueous reaction medium, an organic crosslinking agent and an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer, the method comprising the step of performing the reaction in the presence of a gelation time modifying agent, where the gelation time modifying agent is selected from the group consisting of salts of monovalent and divalent cations, pH modifying agents, and mixtures thereof, provided that

(i) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a monovalent cation, at least about 1 weight percent of the monovalent cation salt is added in formulating the aqueous medium,

(ii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a divalent cation, at least about 0.15 weight percent of the divalent cation salt is added in formulating the aqueous medium,

(iii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH reducing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH reducing agent is present for the aqueous medium to have a pH of about 6.5 or less; and

(iv) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH increasing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH increasing agent is present for the aqueous medium to have a pH of about 7 or more.

14. A method for forming a gel comprising the steps of:

(I) decreasing the pH of an aqueous medium to less than 6.5; and

(II) reacting, in the aqueous medium of step (I), an organic crosslinking agent and an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising the step (III) of increasing the salinity of the aqueous medium, step (III) being performed no later than step (II).

16. A method for forming a gel comprising the steps of:

(I) increasing the divalent cation concentration of an aqueous medium; and

(II) reacting, in the aqueous medium of step (I), an organic crosslinking agent and an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step (III) of decreasing the pH of the aqueous medium to less than 6.5, step (III) being performed no later than step (II).

18. A method for inhibiting the migration of a hazardous acid plume through a subterranean stratum, the method comprising the step of injecting into at least a portion of the acid plume a slug of a composition capable of forming a gel, the composition comprising:

(A) an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer;

(B) an organic crosslinking agent;

(C) water; and

(D) a pH increasing agent, provided that a sufficient amount of the pH increasing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 7 or more.

19. A method for forming a gel in an acidic subterranean formation, the method comprising the step of injecting into at least a portion of the acidic subterranean formation a slug of a composition capable of forming a gel, the composition comprising:

(A) an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer;

(B) an organic crosslinking agent;

(C) water; and

(D) a pH increasing agent, provided that a sufficient amount of the pH increasing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 7 or more.

20. The method of claim 19 where, prior to injecting the slug of the composition, at least a portion of the subterranean formation is subjected to a carbon dioxide flood.

21. A composition comprising:

(A) an ingredient selected from the group consisting of water soluble, crosslinkable polymers and polymerizable monomers capable of forming a crosslinkable polymer;

(B) an organic crosslinking agent;

(C) water; and

(D) a gelation time modifying agent, where the gelation time modifying agent is selected from the group consisting of salts of monovalent and divalent cations, pH reducing agents, pH increasing agents, and mixtures thereof, provided that

(i) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a monovalent cation,

at least about 1 weight percent of the monovalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition,

(ii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises the salt of a divalent cation, at least about 0.15 weight percent of the divalent cation salt is added in formulating the composition,

(iii) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH reducing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH reducing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 6.5 or less; and

(iv) when the gelation time modifying agent comprises a pH increasing agent, a sufficient amount of the pH increasing agent is present for the composition to have a pH of about 7 or more.

22. The composition of claim 22 further comprising a chelating agent.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/US 95/15664

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 E21B33/138 E21B43/25

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 6 E21B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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X	US,A,5 246 073 (B.B.SANDIFORD) 21 September 1993 see the whole document	1-4, 7-13,16, 21,22
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X	EP,A,0 544 377 (ENIRICERCHE S.P.A.) 2 June 1993 see page 2, line 1 - line 13 see page 1, line 49 - page 6, line 47 ---	1-6,8, 13,16, 17,21,22
X	US,A,4 903 767 (P.SHU) 27 February 1990 see column 3, line 7 - column 6, line 14 ---	4,13, 19-21 18
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Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
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